

Background Information on Public Safety: Law and Justice

Demographics

King County covers 2,134 square miles and with a diverse population of over 1.8 million people, it ranks as the 14th most populous county in the nation. Fifty percent of its population lives in suburban cities, 30 % in the city of Seattle and 20 % in unincorporated areas. As of 2008, 69 % of the population was non-Hispanic White, 13 % Asian, 8 % Hispanic/Latino, 6 % Black, 3 % two or more races, and 1 % Native American. In 2000, 15 % of the population was foreign born. People under 18 years of age comprise 22 per cent of the population and those over 65, 11 per cent. Although the median household income in 2007 was over \$66,000, 10 % of people in King County lived below the poverty level.

King County Law and Justice Programs

In King County, some criminal justice services are exclusively the responsibility of County government and are largely funded by County funds (e.g, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Superior Court, and many functions of the Sheriff's Office and District Court), while other criminal justice services are provided by the various municipalities located in King County (e.g., city police departments, city municipal courts). What follows is a list of King County public safety and criminal justice agencies.

With over 1,000 employees and an annual budget of \$135 million, the **King County Sheriff's Office** serves the law enforcement needs of over half a million people in unincorporated areas and twelve contract cities. The KCSO also provides police departments for the Muckleshoot Tribe, Metro Transit, and the King County International Airport. Regional services such as an air support unit and bomb and hazardous device disposal are to all jurisdictions in King County.

The **Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention**, also with over 1,000 employees and an annual budget of \$125 million, is responsible for operating jail facilities for both adults and juveniles. The county's two adult jail facilities include the King County Correctional Facility in downtown Seattle and the Maleng Regional Justice Center in Kent. For juveniles, there is one facility: the Youth Services Center in Seattle. DAJD provides a number of programs that focus on changing inmate behaviors. The **Community Corrections Division** provides pre-trial and sentenced alternatives to secure confinement. The alternatives and services offered strive to use evidence-based practices that promote positive behavior change.

The **Prosecuting Attorney's Office (PAO)** is responsible for the prosecution of all felony and juvenile cases in King County and all misdemeanor cases generated in unincorporated areas of King County. Annually, the PAO receives and reviews over 25,000 criminal investigations and referrals from the county's 38 different law enforcement agencies. This comprises approximately 10,000 felonies, approximately 10,000 misdemeanor cases, 5,000 juvenile cases each year. The Civil Division of the PAO is the County's law firm and serves as legal counsel to County government. The PAO has slightly less than 500 positions and an annual budget of \$56 million.

The **Office of the Public Defender**, with an annual budget just under \$20 million and a County staff of 20, contracts with four nonprofit law firms and maintains an assigned counsel panel to provide for indigent defense. As in most urban jurisdictions, a large majority of felony defendants are not able to afford their own attorney.

Pursuant to the Washington State Constitution and state law, King County operates two separate court systems. **King County Superior Court** is the county's court of general jurisdiction; it can hear any matter arising under state law. In the criminal context, it handles felony matters arising anywhere in King County. In the civil arena, it handles most disputes involving more than \$75,000 and shares jurisdiction with District Court for cases involving lesser amounts. King County Superior Court also handles all cases

of family law (divorces, child custody, receivership, guardianship; parental rights, etc.), juvenile crimes, and civil disputes (contract disputes, monetary claims based on injuries caused by negligence or carelessness, etc.). Its annual budget is \$43 million and its supports 383 positions.

King County District Court is the county's limited jurisdiction court and the largest court of limited jurisdiction in the State, providing services to King County residents. Matters filed with the court include small claims, traffic infractions, protection orders, misdemeanor criminal cases and civil cases up to \$75,000. Criminal and traffic infractions occurring in unincorporated King County or on state roads and highways are filed with district court. The court is also the municipal court for 12 contract cities and has a limited services contract with one city to provide weekend and holiday in custody hearings. Its 2009 budget is \$26 million, and it employs around 250 employees.

The **Department of Community and Human Services** administers numerous programs to reduce justice system impacts for both juveniles and adults and is dedicated to reducing the impacts of youth involvement with the criminal justice system. DCHS offers several programs intended to improve access to mental health and substance abuse treatment and other supportive services as a means to reduce re-offenses. Success in reducing misdemeanor and felony offenses diverts youth from more severe adult criminal behaviors.

Other recent criminal justice planning efforts coordinated by DCHS call for additional alternatives to more costly detention and incarceration and feature programs that demonstrate measurable success in reducing re-entry into the justice systems and avoiding more costly alternatives such as serving jail time. With the **Veterans and Human Services Levy**, the county is expanding criminal justice programs designed to help veterans and others in need achieve and maintain stability in the community and stay out of jail. Several of the strategies in the **Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Action Plan**, funded by the one tenth of one percent sales tax, are intended to have similar positive effects for persons with serious mental illness and/or substance abuse problems.

Public Health - Seattle & King County provides jail health services in the adult detention facilities.

Law and Policy Primer

King County operates under a Home Rule Charter adopted by a vote of the citizens of King County in 1968 and is organized under the Council-Executive form of county government. The Metropolitan King County Council is the policy-making legislative body of the county. The County Council sets tax levies, makes appropriations, and adopts and approves the annual operating and capital budgets for the county. The County Executive is the elected chief executive officer of the county. This Executive oversees the operations of all executive departments and prepares and submits to the County Council the annual budget, comprehensive plans, and other proposed legislation. Other elected county officials include the Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff, Assessor, Elections Director, and Superior and District Court Judges.

Only the Washington State Legislature can enact (or repeal) laws that are punishable by imprisonment. **“Felonies”** are crimes punishable by more than one year in jail or prison. **“Misdemeanors”** are crimes punishable by less than one year in jail. Defendants who are convicted of a crime and sentenced to more than one year serve their sentence in a state prison. Defendants who convicted of a crime and sentenced to less than one year in jail serve their sentence in the King County jail or in a jail operated by a city.

King County Law and Justice Budget (Questions T-52 to 59)

Taxes are the largest source of revenues to King County, accounting for an estimated 35 percent of total revenues and 60 percent of General Fund revenue. The major tax sources for the county include property taxes, sales and use taxes, hotel and motel taxes, and telephone excise taxes to support the enhanced-911 system. The overall 2009 King County budget is \$4.8 billion, of which:

- Law, Safety and Justice programs (police, court, corrections) account for 10%,

- Health and Human Services programs (Public Health, developmental disabilities, Emergency Medical Services, hazardous waste, etc.) for 13%,
- Physical Environment (transit, wastewater, solid waste, parks and recreation, etc.) for 36%,
- General Government (elections, Records & Licensing, assessor, audits, Council, Executive, etc.) for 12%.

Debt service and capital budget accounts for the rest.

Services and programs provided by the County fall under four categories:

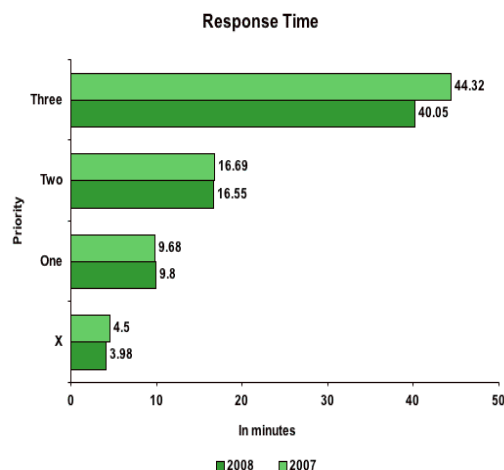
- Regional services required by state law (Superior Court, jail, Public Health, Prosecutor, Public Defender, Public Records, Property Assessment, Elections, Licensing, Juvenile Detention and Court, Treasury for local jurisdictions, Small Claim Court);
- Local services required by state law (local roads outside cities, Sheriff, Misdemeanor Court and related prosecution, public defender, building permits and inspections, fire inspections, Surface Water Management);
- Other regional services per regional voter approval (transit, wastewater treatment, Emergency Medical Services administration and some services, Automatic Fingerprint ID System, Regional Parks, Open Space and Trails);
- Discretionary programs.

Law and justice functions are funded entirely from King County's "General Fund" which also supports other functions including public health, human services, parks, and elections. In 2009, the General Fund overall was reduced by 4.8%, resulting in budget cuts of 2.8% for most law and justice agencies. Continuing county revenue shortfalls in 2010 and 2011 will likely require an additional \$40 million in General Fund cuts in 2010 and another \$60 million in 2011. Because public safety and criminal justice functions are funded solely by the County's General Fund (they comprise 73% of the General Fund), balancing the General Fund budget will require the county to make substantial cuts to public safety programs or to other mandatory or discretionary General Fund programs.

Law Enforcement Response

Crime is influenced by several overlapping environmental factors at the neighborhood, city and regional level, including economic, social, built (physical) and service environments. Working together and in tandem with individual choices and behavior, these environmental factors all influence the prevalence of crime in King County.

The Sheriff's Office responded to 102,360 dispatched calls for service in 2008, down from 117,310 calls in 2007. Response times for Priority X, 2 and 3 calls decreased in 2008, ranging from under four minutes for Priority X calls to 40 minutes for Priority 3 calls.



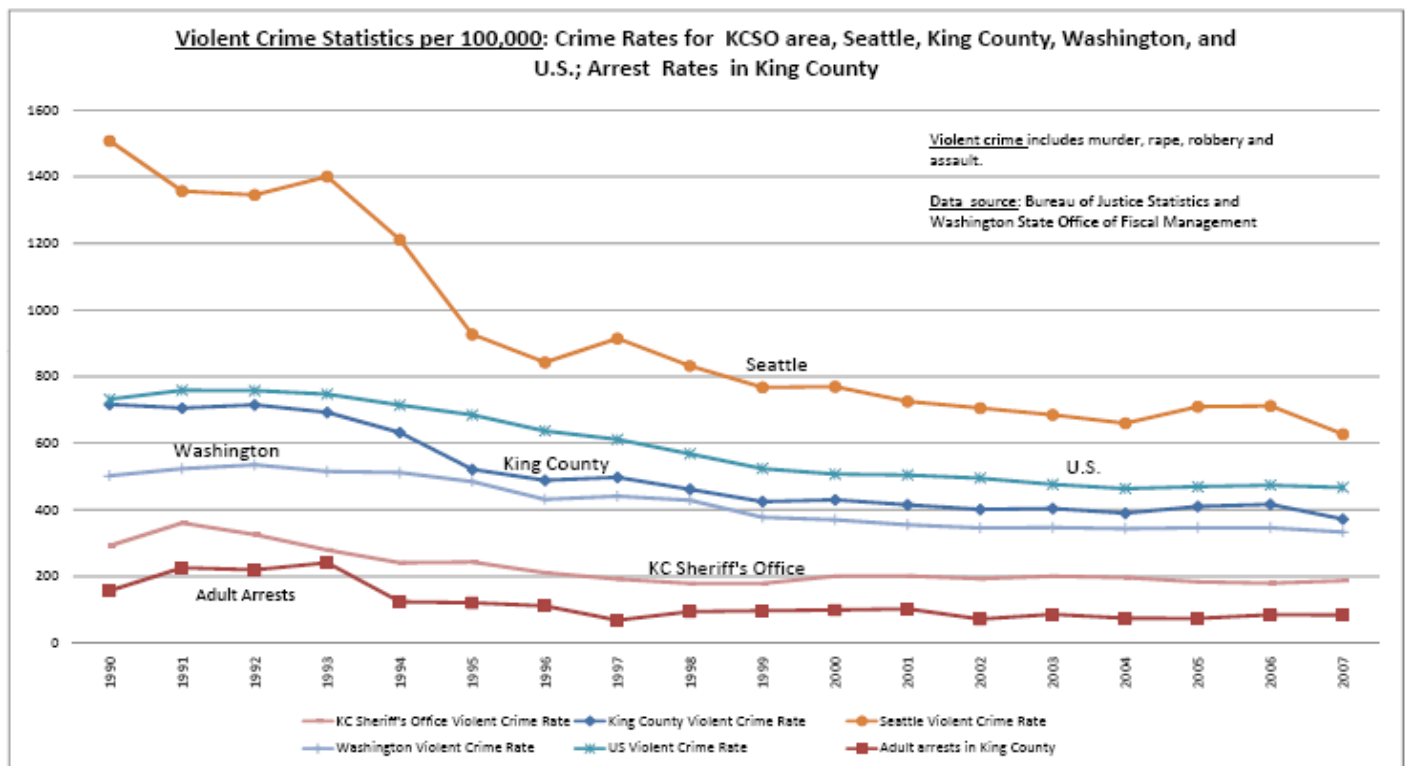
Response times are classified by priority:

- Priority X- critical dispatch: calls that pose an obvious threat to the safety of persons (such as shootings)
- Priority 1- immediate dispatch: calls that require immediate police action (such as injury traffic accidents)
- Priority 2- prompt dispatch: calls that could escalate to a more serious degree if not policed quickly (such as verbal disturbances)
- Priority 3- routine dispatch: calls where response time is not a critical factor (such as audible alarms)

Source: KC Aims High

Crime in King County

The rate of property crimes and major violent crimes has decreased significantly since 1990 in King County as a region as well within the jurisdictions of its two largest police departments: the King County Sheriff's Office and the Seattle Police Department.



While the above table shows regional trends based on population numbers, the table below from a 9/15/09 Seattle Times article shows wide variations in actual numbers of crimes among cities between 2007 and 2008.

Seattle-area crime in 2008

VIOLENT CRIMES	TOTAL		Murder and non-negligent homicide		Robbery		Aggravated assault	
	'07	'08	'07	'08	'07	'08	'07	'08
Bellevue	138	168	0	0	61	72	48	63
Everett	564	584	7	1	209	223	287	284
Federal Way	287	323	3	8	129	170	107	115
Seattle	3,667	3,447	24	29	1,522	1,612	2,031	1,680
Tacoma	2,095	1,995	14	15	647	622	1,258	1,216

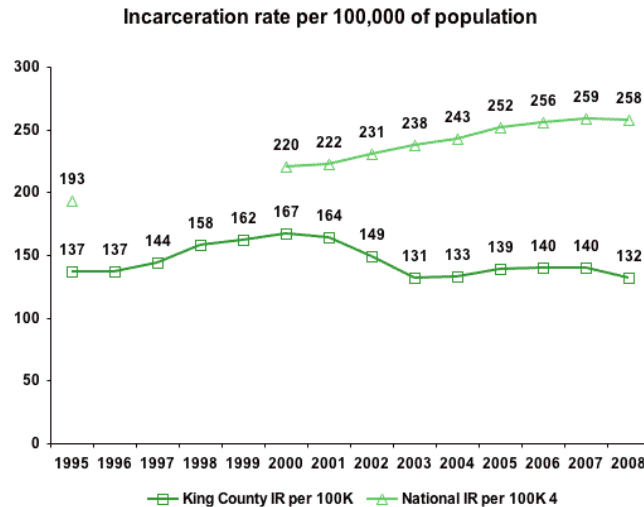
PROPERTY CRIMES	TOTAL		Burglary		Car theft	
	'07	'08	'07	'08	'07	'08
Bellevue	4,181	4,289	583	687	446	275
Everett	8,739	7,542	1,405	1,251	1,878	1,183
Federal Way	4,837	4,549	739	800	939	816
Seattle	33,960	32,820	5,986	6,503	5,782	3,675
Tacoma	14,957	15,071	2,628	2,890	3,343	2,718

Source: FBI

A. RAYMOND/THE SEATTLE TIMES

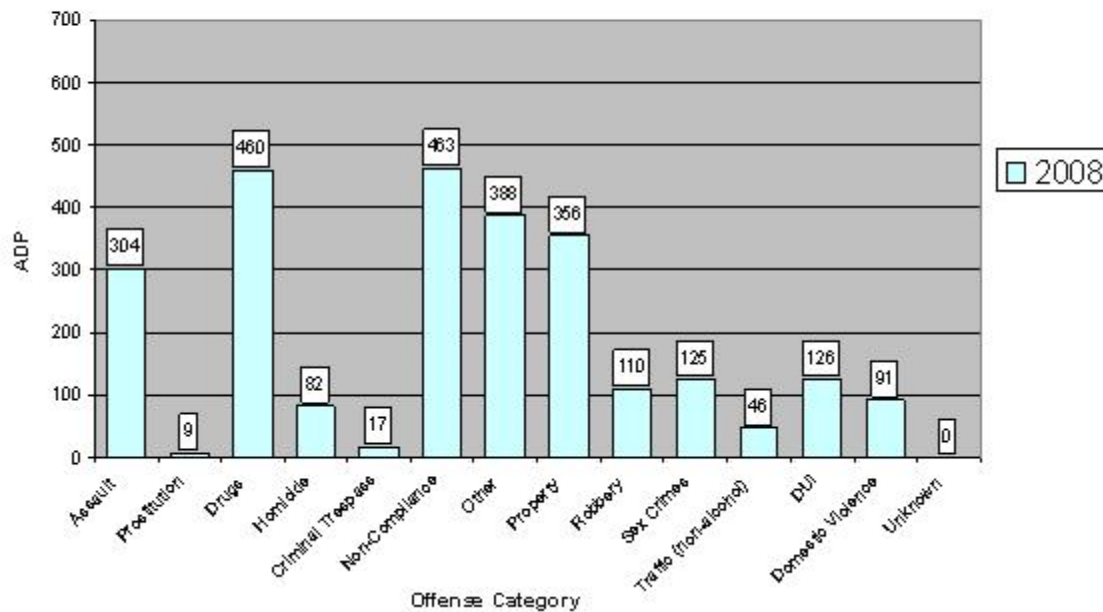
Incarceration in King County

The incarceration rate for the King County jails is substantially lower than the national average for all jails across the country. The most recent national data is from 2008, which showed a rate of 258 incarcerated persons for every 100,000 persons in the population at large. In contrast, King County's incarceration rate was only 132 per 100,000.



Source: KC Aims High

Average Daily Population by Offense Category 2008



Source: KC DAJD

Alternative sentencing and Interventions

Several King County programs maintain behavioral change as their principal objective. The Community Center for Alternative Programs (CCAP), a program of the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention's Community Corrections Division, similar to a day reporting program, offers treatment, education and life skills programs designed to reduce future criminal activity by participants. Since the inception of CCAP, on average, 46 percent of participants complete the program successfully.

The Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) offers several programs intended to reduce re-offenses. Success in reducing misdemeanor and felony offenses diverts youth from more severe adult criminal behaviors. In 2008, 82.5 percent of King County clients who received an intervention experienced a reduction in misdemeanor and felony juvenile court referrals after that intervention. Statewide, felony only intervention programs have performed about the same, with reductions in court referrals of 81-83 percent.

Many individuals in King County jails are affected by mental illness or substance abuse. DCHS provides mental health and substance abuse services to current and former inmates. The percent of those adults with mental illness who have fewer incarcerations the year after receiving services reflects the effectiveness of DCHS programs in improving and stabilizing people's lives in the community. The success of DCHS programs also contributes to reducing King County's criminal justice and emergency medical costs.

Seventy percent of the 1,192 recently incarcerated adults who had received mental health services alone or combined mental health and substance abuse services for a year ending in 2008 had fewer incarcerations in the year following treatment than in the year prior. Approximately 15 percent had the same number of incarcerations and 15 percent had more.

1811 Eastlake ([Question T-45](#)) opened its doors in December 2005. The Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) project provides supportive housing for 75 formerly homeless men and women living with chronic alcohol addiction. The 1811 House does not require residents to stop drinking in order to live in the facility, nor does it forbid residents from consuming alcohol in their rooms. Residents benefit from 24-hour, seven days a week supportive services. Researchers followed 95 chronically homeless alcoholics, who, before moving into the home, had run up a taxpayer bill of \$8.2 million in hospitalizations, emergency services, jail time and sobering center visits. After one year of being in the program, the same group cost taxpayers only \$4 million, the study found. Each resident also drank less the longer they lived in the home, and their toll on publicly funded programs decreased as time went on.

Court operations

Caseload--the number of cases filed with the court--is one indicator of the scope of services provided by the King County Superior and District Courts. From 2003 to 2008, King County Superior Court received an average of 62,700 new case filings per year. District Court averaged 216,000 new filings per year in the same time period.

Both courts operate various court-related programs, in addition to hearing cases. These programs include probation services, therapeutic courts, and programs that assist civil litigants with filing or resolving their cases

As part of Superior Court, **the Family Court** handles all family law matters where children are involved, including: Divorce or legal separation with children, Parenting, Paternity, Adoption, Support, Domestic violence, and some dependency matters.

Family Court Services (FCS) provides parent education, mediation and evaluation services, which often help resolve cases outside of court. FCS also conducts domestic violence assessments, which assist the Court in protecting the interests of children in contested cases, performs parenting evaluations in divorce and contested child custody proceedings mostly for people of low income. Criminal background checks in child custody disputes and domestic violence evaluations are legally mandated services also provided by FCS.

Drug Diversion Court combines the resources of the criminal justice system, drug and alcohol treatment and other community service providers to compel the substance-abusing offender to address his or her substance abuse problem by providing an opportunity for treatment and holding the offender strictly accountable. Drug Diversion Courts are built upon a partnership between the criminal justice system and drug treatment community. Drug Courts are also dependent upon the creation of a non-adversarial courtroom atmosphere where a single judge and a dedicated team of court officers and staff work together toward a common goal of breaking the cycle of drug abuse and criminal behavior.

The **Dependency CASA Program** recruits and trains community volunteers to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children involved in dependency proceedings. Volunteers serving as the "eyes and ears of the Court" spend thousands of hours each year investigating cases, interviewing parties involved in cases, monitoring compliance with court orders, and attending court hearings.

Specialized case management for difficult and/or multiple cases involving the same family is provided by the **Unified Family Court** Case Managers. The UFC Case Management Program combines court actions and hearings for matters involving the same family and allows for coordination of evaluations, social services, and follow-up.

Treatment Court serves juveniles with both drug/alcohol and mental health issues. The process involves comprehensive screening and assessment of the young person's substance abuse and mental health issues, a supportive "therapeutic court" process for addressing the unique needs of youth in the juvenile justice system, and dedicated treatment services.

Family Treatment Court is an alternative to regular dependency court and is designed to improve the safety and well being of children in the dependency system by providing parents access to drug and alcohol treatment, judicial monitoring of their sobriety and individualized services to support the entire family. Studies demonstrate less reliance on foster care, greater reunification rates, and higher rates of treatment engagement and completion for FTDC participants compared to control groups.

The **Trial Court Coordinating Council** (TCCC) is a partnership between Superior Court, District Court, and the county's Municipal Courts. TCCC participants, with the assistance of the Washington Administrative Office for the Courts, look for ways to coordinate operations and streamline access to justice for King County residents.

This document is compiled by the King County Auditor's Office, base on various King County documents and website, King County 2009 approved budget, Aims High.